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ABSTRACT

This document provides an overview, in table form, of research pertaining to the effects of reading aloud to preschool children, and stresses the important benefits that reading aloud to children has on language development, reading interest, and social attitudes and values. A reference list is included to allow teachers to locate the 12 original research reports for further information. (HTH)

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Reading Aloud to Pre-Schoolers Age 3-6: A Review of the Research

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Reading Aloud to Pre-Schoolers Age 3-6: A Review of the Research

Reading aloud to children is an activity often undertaken by parents and teachers of preschool children. Some teachers and some parents read aloud to their children on a regular basis, for example, every night before bedtime or every day as one of the school program's planned activities.

For other teachers and parents, however, reading aloud to children is only an occasional activity. When the preschool teacher suddenly ends up with a few extra minutes in the school day, she may pull a book from the shelves and read it to the children. Or, a parent may take time to read to his child, if the child brings him a book and, pesters, and cajoles to be read to.

Research has shown us that reading to preschool children should be more than an occasional activity, however, --- and has pointed to specific reasons why. Reading aloud to the preschooler can positively affect the child's language development, interest in books, academic readiness, success in learning to read, specific reading interests, and social attitudes and values. Research also provides some suggestions for teaching parents the importance of and techniques for reading aloud to their children.

Table I presents an overview of research pertaining to the effects of reading aloud to preschool children. This table allows the educator to review in summarized form important data which shows

the positive relationship of reading aloud to other educational variables. It is hoped that by making these research results readily available, more teachers and parents will adopt the practice of regularly reading aloud to young children. References following the table allow the reader to locate the original research report to obtain additional information about each study.

Insert Table 1 about here

A review of the research on reading aloud to preschool children can only lead to the conclusion that this activity should be a regular and planned one in every preschool and kindergarten classroom, and in every home where there are young children. Although a simple activity to carry-out, reading aloud to children provides assistance in realizing some of our most important educational objectives for preschool children.

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Table 1

Research Pertaining to Reading Aloud to Preschool Children

Variable investigated	Researcher	Date	Age of subjects	Question	Procedure	Findings
I. Effects on language development	A. Burroughs	1972	3	How will reading aloud affect language development of children of low SES status?	Read to children daily for 3 months.	Scored significantly higher than control group on: a) receptive vocabulary b) expressive vocabulary c) length of sentences used d) Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test
	B. Chomsky	1972	Prereaders	What is the relationship of the amount and complexity of material	Examined variables to determine which showed a positive	Prereaders in highest stages of linguistic development: a) had more books read aloud to them each week

Variable investigated	Researcher	Date	Age of subjects	Question	Procedure	Findings
				children hear read to their linguistic development?	relationship to linguistic stage of development.	b) heard books at higher syntactic complexity levels c) were read to by more people
11. Effects on interest in books	Haskett and Lenfestey	1974	3,4,5	How to increase looking at books as an activity choice in an open classroom preschool.	1) Had books in class-room; 2) brought in new books; 3) read aloud to children from class-room books	-Mere presence of books = low frequency of looking at books as activity choice -Introduction of new books = some increase -Reading aloud of books by adults = produced larger and more stable increases of the desired behavior.

Variable investigated	Researcher	Date	Age of subjects	Question	Procedure	Findings
III. Effects on Academic Readiness	A. Hoskins	1976	Preschool-Kindergarten	Effects of parents reading to children prior to kindergarten entrance on their academic readiness (general, mathematics, knowledge of letters & sounds, aural comprehension)	Read aloud 3 months prior to kindergarten for at least 60 min./wk.	Scored significantly higher than control group on tests of academic readiness

Variable investigated	Researcher	Date	Age of subjects	Question	Procedure	Findings
	B. Ferguson	1979	Kinder-garten	Effects of listening to stories read on kinder-garten chil-ren whose reading readiness scores were low.	Group 1 = heard stories read daily; Group 2 = time divided between hearing stories and language arts activities; Group 3 = regular kinder-garten program.	Group 1 made significantly greater gains in reading readiness scores than Groups 2 and 3.
	C. Henry	1974	Kinder-garten	Will boys read to by fathers score	Group 1 and 2 read aloud to on regular	Boys read to by fathers scored better on one

Variable investigated	Researcher	Date	Age of subjects	Question	Procedure	Findings
				higher on reading readiness measures than when read to by mothers or not at all?	basis for 6 months prior to 1st grade (Group 1 by fathers; Group 2 by mothers.) Group 3 not read to.	measure, but not on others.
IV. Effects on learning to read	A. Durkin	1966	Preschool	What are the characteristics of children who read before entering school?	Examined variables to determine which showed a positive relationship to early reading.	In every case the children were read to by their parents or by older sisters & brothers.

Variable investigated	Researcher	Date	Age of subjects	Question	Procedure	Findings
	B. Harty	1975	Kinder-garten	Comparison of characteris-tics of kinder-garten entrants who could read with those who could not.	Compared the two groups on 21 variables.	Frequency of parents reading to child was one of 8 variables which showed differences in favor of the readers.
	C. Durkin	1974-5	4	The effective-ness of a pro-gram for teaching pre-school child-ren to read.	Program in-cluded (a) development of sight vocabulary; (b) letter & numeral naming; (c) reading	Reading achieve-ment scores in grades 1 & 2 significantly exceeded those of control group. However, the gains over the control group were not

Variable investigated	Researcher	Date	Age of subjects	Question	Procedure	Findings
					aloud to them.	maintained in grades 3 and 4.
V. Effects on specific reading interests	Mason and Blanton	1971	3,4,5	What is appropriate story content for beginning reading instruction?	Stories read aloud to preschool children to determine reading interests & literature preference.	After children learned to read, they were more eager to read for themselves books which had been read aloud to them, or books of the same type, than to read other books.
VI. Effects on social attitudes	Berg-Cross and Berg-Cross	1978	4,5,6	Will changes in social attitudes of	Picture storybooks about sex	Little changes in attitudes of control group;

Variable investigated	Researcher	Date	Age of subjects	Question	Procedure	Findings
				preschoolers occur as a result of hearing stories read which express values?	roles, friendship, death, & risk taking merely read aloud to children (no follow-up discussion).	experimental groups' attitude changes were large and positive
VII. Parent training	Swift	1970	3,4,5	Can educationally limited	Several specific techniques used to teach mothers to read & discuss stories with their children.	Learned to read stories & discuss them with greater elaboration; became more atuned to respond to their children's questions; changed their perceptions about their roles.